

LETTERS

A FINE BALANCE

Re "Left Out of Affirmative Action" [March 19-25]:

Nat Hentoff's portrayal of the Asian American Legal Foundation's brief opposing the University of Michigan's admissions policy as the definitive Asian American voice was irresponsible and exploitative.

He conveniently fails to mention that 28 national and local Asian Pacific American-based groups endorsed an amicus brief supporting the university. Many Asian Americans support affirmative action because they understand that diversity in the classroom better prepares students of all races to succeed in the workplace and the community, where glass-ceiling issues and exclusionary business opportunities are still a concern.

Finally, Hentoff simply misstates facts. The University of Michigan does not require that a fixed number of minority students be admitted—that would be a quota system and unconstitutional. The university also weighs the benefits of admitting applicants who are not mentioned in policy, like Asian Americans.

Hopefully future articles about affirmative action and the Asian American perspective will be more balanced.

Karen K. Narasaki
President and Executive Director
National Asian Pacific American
Legal Consortium
Washington, D.C.

Kudos to Nat Hentoff on the article about affirmative action disregarding Asian Americans. I'm an African American attending St. Bonaventure University (insert basketball

scandal joke here) and I believe in affirmative action only until we fix the elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

But as long as it's here, it should benefit all minorities—not just people of my color in particular. This is why there is such a backlash with this policy. If it really appealed to all minorities (including women), then not as many people would talk about it... except maybe Republicans.

Stephon Williams
Buffalo, New York

Nat Hentoff replies: My only reference to the Asian American Legal Foundation's brief was its quotation from the Supreme Court's 1995 Adarand decision that "the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution protect persons, not groups." That is why I agree with Justice William O. Douglas that individuals, not groups, should qualify for special attention if they have overcome various forms of adversity.

There is a quota in the admissions policy of the University of Michigan's law school, one of the cases before the Supreme Court. That school requires that 10 to 12 percent of each entering class be black, Chinese, Native American, and mainland Puerto Rican. By any definition, that is a quota, a fixed number. I do want to thank Stephon Williams for his incisive clarity on this issue.

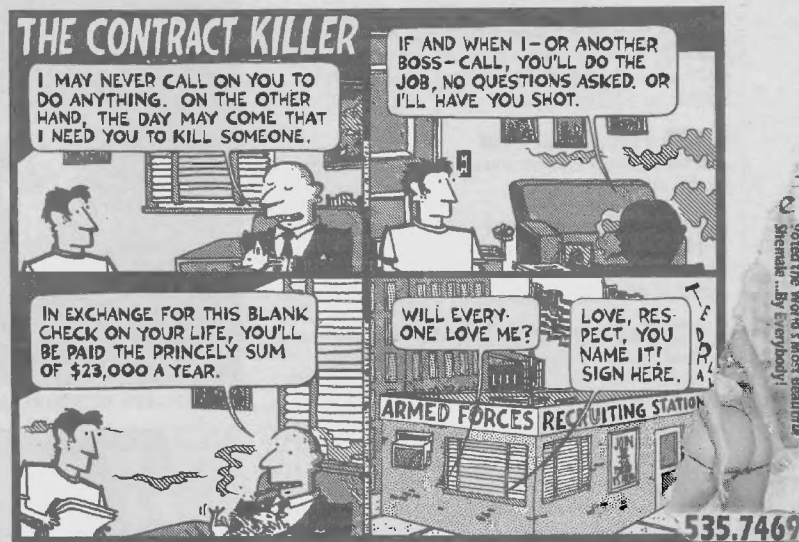
A SEPARATE PEACE

Re Daniel King's "Fire Music" [March 12-18]:

While I often lament the scarcity of the revolutionary spirit that first attracted me to jazz during the '60s, in much of the music's contemporary expression, I find it even more deplorable that the issue is being used to generate divisiveness in a genre whose focus on self-expression necessitates a diversity of approaches. In trying to frame a complex issue in black and white, King's article may construct the popular controversy that sells periodicals, but it fails to consider

SEARCH AND DESTROY

BY TED RALL



the gray area at the heart of the matter.

For better or worse, jazz is becoming an institutionalized music, and institutions are by nature conservative. So Jazz at Lincoln Center's centrist focus should not be surprising, and its attempt to explore the subject of "fire music" is laudable. The attempt to denigrate that music is not. Not all socially and politically conscious jazz was avant-garde ("not swinging"). Art Blakey recorded "Freedom Rider"; Elvin Jones, "All Deliberate Speed"; Charles Mingus, "Remember Rockefeller at Attica." Bill Evans's "Peace Piece" and Horace Silver's "Peace" are indisputably anti-war anthems—just as Ornette Coleman's *Peace* is.

Jazz's history of activism is an especially important subject during these times, but using it as fodder for infighting makes about as much sense as Bush waging war on Iraq to bring peace to the Middle East.

Russ Musto
Clason Point

Daniel King replies: I am not arguing for relaxed standards at Jazz at Lincoln Center—I am arguing against revisionist history there. The NEA funds Mr. Marsalis to promote jazz culture—not to draw its parameters based on handed-down definitions he lifts unintelligently from Albert Murray's Stomping the Blues. And while we can debate to no end what counts as jazz culture, you'll have a difficult time convincing educated thinkers that activist aesthetics don't.

IF THE SHOE FITS

Re Melissa Maerz's "Mome Raths Outgrabe" [March 5-11]:

The recent Lightning Bolt review should have been titled "How to Be a Big Fat Poser." The new homoerotic embrace of Locust, Lightning Bolt, etc., is for idiots who have recently become experts on cool tennis shoes. There have been many bands doing this sound before, and doing it better, but when taken to the post-punky, indie-boy/girl, lowest-common-social-denominator crowd, it becomes "revolutionary."

Lightning Bolt is for people who write/read the emptiest form of print ever—weekly papers.

Will Betts
Chicago, Illinois

MARVELOUS MARVISI

Re Frank Owen's "Magic Carpet Ride" [February 26-March 4]:

How sensational this story was! That he was able to include drug dealing, money laundering, the Mafia, double-dealing, arson, the FBI, and Puff Daddy all in one story makes it more worthy of the *New York Post's* Page Six than of the *Voice*. I found it to be untimely and irresponsible.

Owen's story holds no verity, especially if the rumored FBI investigation fails to materialize. As a former employee of both Marvisi and Peter Gatten, allow me this: I could find and fill an entire nightclub with former promoters and employees whom Gatten has fucked over; Gatten has left a negative stigma on nightclub owners and on the entire industry for years to come. While Marvisi at his worst is just a pain in the ass, he is still a man who has earned my professional love, respect, and best regards.

Dennis Sanabria
Lower East Side

AWARDS

The *Voice* congratulates staff writer Tom Robbins, who has won the 2002 IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors) Award, recognizing outstanding investigative reporting. His series "The Lush Life of a Rudy Appointee" took top honors in the Local Circulation Weekly category.

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SCHLOCK 'N' ROLL

BY WARD SUTTON

